E 440
.5
.B65

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

What Christianity Demands of Us

AT

THE PRESENT CRISIS:

A SERMON

Preached on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 29, 1860:

BY

HENRY A. BOARDMAN, D.D.

PHILADELPHIA:

J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.

1860.

E440
.5
.E65

C. SHERMAN & SON, Printers,
S. W. Corner Seventh and Cherry Streets, Philadelphia.

Philadelphia, November 29, 1860.

Rev. H. A. Boardman, D.D.

Dear Sir: The undersigned, believing that the Thanksgiving Sermon delivered by you this morning, will so commend itself to the patriotism and common sense of the country as to exercise a decided influence in allaying the unhappy feeling now prevalent North and South, respectfully request a copy for publication.

Respectfully, your friends and fellow-citizens,

R. Patterson,
James Thompson,
James Ross Snowden,
Martin Thomas, Jr.,
R. H. Townsend, M.D.,
William Veitch,
William Shippen,
William A. Ingham,
Andrew C. Craig,
R. C. Grier,
Henry Carleton, of La.,
Robert E. Patterson,
E. Cameron,
John H. Brown,
W. C. Patterson,
Hugh Elliott,
D. Hayes Agnew, M.D.,
Hugh Craig.

Philadelphia, December 1, 1860.

Gentlemen:

In consenting to the publication of my sermon, I am doing what I had fully determined not to do. It was with great reluctance that I undertook to discuss the question of the day at all, especially as the limits of an ordinary discourse would forbid me to do more than touch upon it in some of its most obvious aspects. Those who may read the sermon, will be apt to feel that there is too little said on the "Northern side" of this unhappy controversy. My object, as *you* very well understand, was to lend my humble influence to the adjustment of this unnatural strife. Should it please a benign Providence to carry the Union through this conflict, it may be safely left to the reason, the patriotism, and the religion of the country, to compose *all* the differences which now distract us. Meanwhile, we must all agree, that in the present posture of affairs, *Disunion* would be at once the most unwarrantable and the most futile of all expedients for healing our troubles.

As regards the fugitive slave law, every right-minded Southern man will assent to these propositions. 1st. That such a law should be so framed as to afford adequate protection to free colored people; and 2dly. That it should embrace no provision, adapted simply to provoke resentful feeling, without adding in the slightest degree to its efficiency. Let the law be so shaped as to meet these conditions, and let the North repeal its nullifying statutes, and this cause of irritation will be cancelled.

It may not be my province to speak of slavery in the Territories; but I cannot refrain from saying, that the whole agitation upon that subject looks to me, in the main, like the work of desperate politicians. All the other cardinal issues upon which the country has been divided, are put to rest. The contingencies of *this* question must inevitably be controlled by agencies which are paramount to all human legislation. But it offers a convenient lever for stirring up the sediment of party feeling, and fomenting our sectional jealousies; and therefore it must be plied, no matter what the consequences to the country. We who are not politicians (I speak for some millions of people) have too deep a stake in the Republic to regard this course of things with satisfaction.

It fell to my lot, just ten years ago, to preach a Sermon on "The Union," which some of the gentlemen, whose signatures are attached to the note before me, took an active part in circulating. That sermon has long been out of print. The incompleteness of the argument presented in my recent discourse, makes me unwilling that the one pamphlet should go forth without the other. I have, therefore, requested the publishers to issue a limited edition of the sermon of 1850.

With a grateful appreciation of the kindness with which you regard my humble efforts in behalf of our country,

I remain, Gentlemen,

Very faithfully yours,

Henry A. Boardman.

To the Hon. Robert C. Grier, Major-General Patterson, Hon. Henry Carleton, of La., Hon. James Thompson, and others.

SERMON.

"I WILL SING OF MERCY AND JUDGMENT."
PSALM 101 : 1.

This will strike you as an unusual text for a Thanksgiving Discourse. But it requires neither apology nor explanation; for it is not more "unusual" than the circumstances in which we meet.

We are summoned to our sanctuaries to render thanks to God for his manifold blessings. It is a fitting service. We may well "sing of mercy." For what tongue can recount our mercies? For another year, God has blessed us with peace. He has exempted our cities from the pestilence. With the exception of a portion of our territory, which has been scourged with a protracted drought, the harvests were never more abundant. For another twelvemonth the country has enjoyed the ordinances of the Gospel. The Churches have prospered. The institutions of Christian benevolence have grown stronger, and the work of Missions has been carried forward, at home and abroad, with increased energy. If we turn to our own private and domestic affairs, there is the same

record of mercies,—the same uninterrupted flow of the Divine goodness. We must be obdurate, indeed, not to feel that we have cause to keep a DAY OF THANKSGIVING unto God; to "come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms."

And yet it is not *all* mercy. There is a shadow upon our joy. This sacred festival comes to us curtained with clouds. We have to "sing of judgment" as well as mercy. For we cannot look over the land without an undefined sense of danger and sorrow, which *will* blend itself with our anthems of praise.

This feeling must be very general to-day. Some may try to stifle it, with the consciousness, real or imaginary, that they have had no agency in producing the present state of things. Others may try to drown it in reproaches heaped upon those whom they regard as the authors of our misfortunes. But still the feeling exists. The love of the UNION is too strong to be suppressed when danger threatens. It is too strong for philosophy; too strong for party zeal; too strong for sectional prejudice; too strong even for the conscious desire to do justice to all men and to all questions. The UNION has come to be associated in our minds with our most sacred civil rights and privileges; and, reason about it as we may, when it is imperilled, our fears and anxieties can no more be repressed, than could those of the Hebrews when the ark of the covenant was in jeopardy.

That it should be imperilled now,—that in the

midst of peace, plenty, and prosperity, every branch of business flourishing, and the masses of the people supplied with the means of a comfortable subsistence and of social progress, beyond any other nation the sun shines upon, we should find ourselves face to face with this most appalling calamity, *a disruption of the* UNION, is an anomaly to which the annals of mankind afford no parallel, and which, should the blow fall, future historians will ponder with astonishment.

Of the causes which have conspired to bring about this crisis, this is not the place to speak in detail. It might not comport with the office I bear, to utter all that I think and feel on the subject. But the agencies at work in engendering these troubles, are not purely political. So far from it, the political element has recruited itself from the realm of morals, and even invoked the sacred name of Religion to second its efforts: and it has by this alliance accomplished what it never could have effected by its own resources. That the Christianity of the country is a mighty power for good or evil, must be apparent from the fact, that the various denominations reputed "Evangelical," comprised, ten years ago, an aggregate of nearly thirty thousand ministers and churches: it may, under the new census, amount to forty thousand. When we consider that the Church is a Divine institution; that its ministry and ordinances are of God; and that it has during the past eighteen centuries wrought greater changes in the condition of the world than all other agencies combined: we cannot err in

supposing that it is capable of wielding a potential influence for good or for evil in our own country. We may go further and say, that if it had wisely and faithfully fulfilled its mission, the evils which now beset us might have been prevented, or greatly ameliorated. This observation is not made of any one sect, nor of any one section of the country. I am dealing with general views of the subject, and affirm, that it is a legitimate inference from the existing state of things, that our Christianity has come short of its mission. It *ought* to have accomplished far more towards mitigating our social evils, imbuing the people with sentiments of moderation and justice, and making the citizens of different States kind and tolerant towards each other.

To speak plainly,—for we have but one trouble, and all these bitter streams may be traced to that fountain, this whole subject of *Slavery* has been managed in a way which reflects discredit upon our Christianity. There *ought* to have been religion enough in the country to repress or preclude the disorders which have grown out of the agitation of the subject. It ought to be competent to the people, of whatever States or territories, to meet together and discuss the subject without asperity of feeling. We are one people. Our government is one. We are one in our achievements and traditions; one in our rights and interests. It is worse than idle, it is offensive and disreputable, for one portion of the UNION to vaunt itself over another. It is not only the law of reason and con-

sanguinity, but the necessity of our political condition, that if one member suffer, all must suffer with it. However we might wish it otherwise, our experience at the present moment must satisfy the most skeptical, that this point is irrevocably settled. Self-interest, then, no less than equity, forbids us to do anything which looks to the advantage of one part of the confederacy at the expense of another. And certainly Christianity will not tolerate this.

But to give some order and consistency to the discussion, let us inquire briefly, WHAT CHRISTIANITY DOES REQUIRE OR FORBID AT OUR HANDS, IN RESPECT TO THIS VEXED QUESTION OF SLAVERY.

We shall all agree that Christianity permits us to *form our own views* respecting the abstract morality of slavery,—subject, of course, to the responsibility we owe to God.

You have made up your mind that slavery is necessarily sinful. Not only is it wrong in its accessories and abuses, but the relation itself is wrong. It is sinful *per se*. So that every one who holds a slave is living in wilful sin.—You have a right to your opinion. You have a right to express it. You have a right to try to win others to the same view, provided only you make use of fair arguments, and present them in a Christian spirit.

But Christianity secures the same right of opinion to your neighbor—living, it may be, in the same square with you, or living a thousand miles away. He believes that slavery is right. He regards it as

the best form which the universal and necessary dependence of labor upon capital, can assume. He believes that as to the African race, it is the true condition for their security and happiness.—He has the same right to his opinions that you have; and the same right to disseminate them,—provided he do it by fair means and in a becoming temper.

Here is a third individual who differs from you both. Slavery, as it exists in our Southern States, is not, in his view, "essentially" sinful; but it is a great evil, and there are many sins growing out of it. It is desirable (he thinks) that it should be abolished,—desirable for both races, for the whites equally with the blacks.—He, too, is entitled to his opinion; and has the liberty of propagating it,—always, however, with the limitations which have been prescribed.

Leaving these parties for a moment, let us glance at the posture of things in our country.

Slavery existed in these Colonies at the time of the Revolutionary war. It was one of the chief hinderances to the formation of a Federal compact. The Southern States would consent to a UNION only upon the condition, that the Constitution should insure the *rendition* of "persons held to service" in one State, on their escaping to another.* The Convention and the

* "No person held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due."—*Constitution of the United States*, Art. iv, Sect. 2.

country had to choose between this alternative, and No Union.* They did choose. The provision was duly incorporated with the Constitution. The compact thus formally made, was as formally ratified. It has been accepted by every State which has come into the Union since. And God has set his seal to the wisdom and patriotism of the founders of the Republic, by crowning the government they established with unexampled prosperity.

The Union established, several of the States abolished slavery within their limits; others retained it. Under the Constitution, each State has the paramount and undivided jurisdiction of this question within its own territory. One State may no more interfere with the legislation of another on this subject, than England may interfere with the legislation of France on the question of a Poor-law or a University.

To recall, now, two of our representatives. Suppose the second of them, in his zealous advocacy of slavery, should bestir himself to have the system reinstated in the Free States: that he should denounce these States as refusing to conform their social economy to the most approved model; that he should brand their churches as unfaithful to the truth, because (I am

* This has been disputed. But Judge McLean, of the Supreme Court, in giving his opinion in a fugitive case which came before him in 1853, made the following statement: "Without a provision on the subject, no constitution could have been adopted. I speak from information received from the late Chief Justice Marshall, who was one of the chief actors in that day, than whom no man then living was of higher authority."

stating the case as he would be likely to put it) they would not encourage the restoration of a primitive Scriptural institution which God Himself ordained by express statute among the Hebrews (See Lev. 25 : 39–46; Exod. 21 : 2–6); which the Saviour forbore, in any direct terms, to condemn; which the Apostles impliedly sanctioned by prescribing the reciprocal duties of masters and servants; and which the entire Christian Church cherished without compunction until the latter part of the eighteenth century, as an institution not prohibited by the word of God. Suppose, I say, this pro-slavery enthusiast should assail the North in this spirit and on these grounds; and that he should use the pulpit, the rostrum, and the press, to inflame the minds of his fellow-citizens against the Northern people, their legislatures, their courts, and their churches, because they refused to come into his views of slavery. Would this be Christianity? Would this be exercising a right? or carrying out a principle of morals? or fulfilling the stipulations of the Constitution? If I must answer these questions for you, I would say, that a career like this could derive as little countenance from religion as from patriotism; and that whatever might be the personal convictions of the party concerned, to attempt to force them by such means upon the people of the Free States, would be as unwarrantable as it would to apply the same sort of moral intimidation to the people of Holland or of Prussia for the same end. I say, further, that a procedure of this kind, if persevered in, would enkindle

a feeling of indignation throughout the entire North, which nothing could abate but an absolute renunciation of this policy.

If I hesitate about reversing this picture, and tracing the imaginary career of the *first* of the three representative characters introduced to you, it is because I do not wish to foment feeling on this subject; I would if possible allay it. But it would seem as if the most obvious moral distinctions and the plainest rules even of Christian duty, were sometimes completely obscured by the clouds and dust of a political canvass. If the country is to be extricated from its present lamentable condition, all parties will have sins to confess and forsake. We must retrace our steps to the solid ground where we stood *together* for so many years, a united, happy, and thriving people. And the only way to do this, is to see just what the devious path is by which we have been led astray.

I have sketched the career of an earnest pro-slavery man essaying to coerce the Free States into the re-adoption of that system. Nine-tenths of the congregation present will be ready to say, that the "counterpart" to this picture would fail to do justice to the prevalent sentiment of the North towards the South; and that it is a calumny to allege, that there is any general disposition to invade the constitutional rights of the South. Conceding the truth of this to a certain extent, it could not be deemed inapposite to refer here to the legislation which has, in so many States,

practically nullified one of the vital compromises of the Constitution already referred to. That Christianity must reprobate the violation of a compact, of such profound significance that it is justly regarded as one of the main pillars of our UNION, is too clear to require argument. But it is more to my purpose to speak of what may have been done in the name of religion.

It is the moral aspect of the institution with which our representative-man has to do. In his view, slavery is essentially a *sin*. He feels bound, therefore, to set himself against it. Not content with defending his own views by argument, he enters upon a crusade against his brethren whose lot it is to have inherited this system of servitude. In terms, he concedes their entire political control over the subject. He would "let them manage it as they see fit." But their *good name and character* are a fair target for his shafts. They are the sponsors of an institution which is surcharged with iniquity. He employs the pulpit and the press, the lyceum and the legislative hall, to expatiate on its enormities. He would on no account "interfere with it:" that he has no legal right to do! But no law forbids him to fill the public ear with tales of horror about it, and to spread far and wide the impression that all slaveholders are monsters of lust and cruelty. It were something if he enlisted in this crusade, only the secular press and popular assemblies. But it is a religious question. He takes it into the house of God. He brings it into grave ecclesiastical

convocations. And with such skill does he ply his mighty enginery, that step by step he triumphs over their reason, and persuades them, even with the Bible in their hands, to proclaim that a slaveholder can have no place in the Church of Christ!

It is of no avail to allege that these extreme views are confined to a small number of persons. For it cannot be denied, that they have proved strong enough to divide most of the leading denominations of the country. And the whole current of influence, with the Northern portions of these churches, as well as with a large part of the churches of New England, has gone to affix the base stigma upon the tens of thousands of noble-minded and devout Christians at the South, that they were persons utterly unfit to come to the Lord's table.

Is *this* Christianity? Is this fulfilling the compromises of the Constitution? Is this cherishing the UNION? Is it helping either the white man or the black man?

Yet, notwithstanding these facts, neither religion nor patriotism has forsaken the country. The people, as a body, have no sympathy with measures which tend to disturb the harmony of the States. They may be misled for a while. Even the educated and influential classes may become so familiarized to a style of discussion like that just referred to, on the part of orators and journalists, as not to heed the deep and flagrant wrong it is doing to a large portion of the country. It may require some great shock to

break up this slumber, and dissipate the fogs, and reveal the rocks towards which the ship is driving. But once aroused, no effort will be wanting which may help to avert the threatened catastrophe.

To this point, apparently, we have now come. For the fourth time within forty years,—for the question has recurred with a strange uniformity every decade,—we are called to confer about the dismemberment of the UNION; not, this time, as a mere possibility, but as an event by no means improbable. The gravity of the crisis is beginning to impress all minds: if there be any who still treat it with levity, they are not of a character to make their opinions worth noticing.

Of the calamities which a destruction of the UNION would involve, whether as regards our own welfare as a nation, the prospects of the African race, or the cause of civil and religious liberty throughout the globe, I shall not trust myself to speak. But the stake which *Christianity* has in the perpetuity of this government, is beyond the power of language to express. The blow which strikes down our Constitution, must tell with most disastrous effect upon the interests of true religion at home and abroad. The instinct of self-preservation, then, no less than a generous patriotism, demands that Christianity should exert her benign power to avert, if possible, this impending disaster. And this obligation becomes all the more imperative, when it is remembered that she has suffered her high prerogative to be abused, to the accelerating of the evils which now encompass us. If

the Christians of the country, or large numbers of them, have, however unwittingly, contributed to bring about the present state of things, they cannot, in common integrity, refuse their aid in retrieving our affairs.

The first recourse of the Church must be to *the throne of grace*. There is no power wielded among men greater than that of Prayer. It is an unspeakable comfort to know that "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth;" that nations are under his control; that he can set up and destroy them at his pleasure; and that he has often interposed to deliver them from danger in answer to prayer. The feeling which becomes us is,—"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." Dark as may be the clouds above us, he has but to blow upon them, and they are gone. Of the millions who make up the population of our land, there is not an individual whose heart is not in His hand as the clay is in the hands of the potter. The various assemblies of the people and of their rulers, in which these grave issues are to be discussed, can be swayed by his mysterious influence as easily as he guides the breeze upon the waves. Nor ought we to doubt that his ear will be open to the prayers of his people on this behalf. For our institutions were founded in the fear of God. He has blessed us with a profusion of spiritual mercies. He has made this nation one of the main bulwarks of the Protestant religion. And the overthrow of our government would weaken the power

of Christianity all over the globe. We must believe, then, that prayer for the deliverance and preservation of the country will be acceptable to God. When Moses interceded for the chosen people, against the Egyptians; and Asa, against the Ethiopians; and Jehoshaphat, against the Ammonites; and Hezekiah, against the Assyrians, the coveted deliverance came. Nay, to come nearer home, in the War of the Revolution, and at each of the great crises in our history, already alluded to, the Church gave herself to importunate prayer; and the pillar of fire re-appeared to guide us through the darkness. Why may it not be so again?

True it is, we have sinned against God. The prevailing spirit of the nation has been a spirit of pride and vain-glorious boasting. In our prosperity we have forgotten our dependence. Denying the Author of our mercies, we have virtually said, "My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this greatness." And He is rebuking our ingratitude and presumption. But He is not a vindictive Sovereign. Judgment is His "strange work." The temper which prompts a nation to prayer, will lead them to penitence also; and if we return to God, God will return to us.

But this is not enough. If Christianity is to be the arbiter of these strifes, she will enjoin a very different treatment of the subject which has occasioned them, from that which has prevailed of late years.

And here, before proceeding, let me meet a senti-

ment which may possibly be upon the lips of some who are present. You will say to me, "Why do you speak only of the misdeeds of the North? Has the South been guiltless in this matter? Have we no aggressions to complain of? And *slavery* itself,—why do you not denounce the system, while you are telling us what Christianity demands of *us* in respect to it?"

These are frank questions, and they shall be as frankly answered.

My general position, in this argument, is the following, viz.: that it is, to a large extent, through the inertness or by the perversion of our Christianity, that the country has been brought into its present straits; that if, in dealing with the subject of slavery, we (the people of all parties and sections) had been guided by the principles and precepts of the Gospel, we should have escaped these difficulties; and that they can even now, by God's blessing, be removed, if the spirit of true religion be allowed to control the adjustment of them. Let all parties agree to do what the plainest dictates of Christianity require them to do, and our troubles are at an end.

This being the aim of the present discussion, I dwell upon the delinquencies and duties of the North, because I have to do with the North. There are, no doubt, ministers of the Gospel at the South, who are to-day expatiating on the errors and duties of the South. I have said nothing,—I shall say nothing,—which imports that all the right of this unhappy controversy is upon one side, and all the wrong upon the other; for I do not so believe.

But when you ask me, in the name of Christianity, to "*denounce the system of slavery* as it exists at the South," I tell you frankly, that if I should stand up in this pulpit and do this thing, I should expect Christianity to denounce *me*. Wherefore? Because I *like* the system of African slavery, and desire to see it perpetuated? No: God forbid. But for these two reasons. First. That is not my concern. As a citizen of a free State, I have all the obligations, political and moral, that I care to have, without arrogating responsibilities which do not belong to me. I am no more answerable for Southern slavery, than I am for the serfdom of Russia, or the military system of Austria. The British government imposed it upon the Colonies; and the whole burden of it now rests upon those who have inherited it from that source. I do not envy them the burden. If I could, I would gladly lighten it for them. They have my sympathy. They shall *not* have my maledictions.

In the second place, the office you would lay upon me, is one which I could not discharge without violating sacred obligations, both civil and religious.

The point has been already adverted to. I recur to it for the purpose of stating more distinctly *what Christianity demands of us* in the present crisis.

The feeling seems to have become widely diffused through the Northern States, that the South could have no just cause of complaint, except in the event of some overt attempt to interfere with her internal legislation. The fallacy of this idea has perhaps been

made sufficiently apparent, by the supposed case of a pro-slavery man, or a pro-slavery political party, attempting to coerce the North into the adoption of their views. But let me remind you, that while we may have abstained, except in one particular, from actual intervention in the affairs of those States, their system of servitude has been a standing theme of discussion in very many Northern papers, Northern pulpits, and Northern legislatures, for the last ten years; that the whole artillery of denunciation and abuse has been brought to bear upon them; and that these imputations have been virtually endorsed by the action of several large religious denominations in withdrawing from them all Christian fellowship.

Now, place yourselves in their circumstances, and say whether you would be likely to bear this treatment with composure. There are injuries not definable by statute, and too tenuous to be laid hold of by the tribunals; which, nevertheless, are more intolerable than downright violence. To be upbraided with living in shameless sin; to be persistently reproached with oppression and cruelty; to be denied a place in the Church of Christ as being destitute of all truth and righteousness,—this is more than flesh and blood can bear, and a great deal more than the people of any Northern State would quietly submit to from any quarter or under any circumstances.

I do not charge this conduct upon the Free States as a body. It is one of the inexcusable faults of the South, that they refuse to do us justice on this point.

There are tens of thousands, yes, hundreds of thousands, at the North, who utterly reprobate this behavior. And I am proud to express it as my firm conviction, that the great State in which we live, abhors it. Still, it is part of a *system* which has found large favor at the North; which has enlisted powerful interests in its support; and which has been persevered in, after years of remonstrance from those who were aggrieved by it.

Here, then, is something to be *done*, if we really desire to see this strife composed. It is one of the first dictates of Christianity, to do justice; and, where we have erred, to "cease to do evil," and, if possible, redress the wrong we have committed. Whatever mists of passion and prejudice may have obscured the merits of this question hitherto, the real state of the case is now emerging into the light; and we cannot deny that the spirit of the compact with our brethren has been violated. We must make up our minds to leave the institution of slavery where Providence has placed it,—in their hands. Its moralities no less than its social and commercial relations, are *theirs*. We are not called upon to approve of it. But Christian charity forbids that we should malign them for supporting it. Interwoven as it is with the whole texture of Southern society, with their domestic habits, their education, their business, their politics, their daily intercourse; and spreading over the entire fabric of Southern life a sensitiveness which responds to the slightest touch; it is our manifest duty to abstain

from all intermeddling with it. If they are wrong in the views they have taken of it, we are not responsible for their errors, nor are we just now in a position to put them right. They claim, as we do, the right to select their own teachers; and no dictate either of reason or revelation bids us attempt to force our instructions upon them.

There are in the Southern States (the fact is too weighty to be overlooked) the same *Churches* which exist at the North,—with this difference, however: that a much greater proportion, probably, of their Churches than of ours, are embraced in the denominations styled "Evangelical." These Churches comprise a very numerous and intelligent membership, and a ministry not inferior to that in the Free States. It will be generally admitted that, aside from the presence of slavery, the Christians of the South exhibit as large a measure of the fruits of righteousness, as much devotion, as much brotherly love, as much kindness to the poor, as much zeal for the spread of the Gospel, as much liberality in the work of Missions, as their brethren of the North. Why, then, can they not be entrusted with the management of this question also? Where is the modesty, or the charity, of assuming that we are better qualified than they can be, to form a just estimate of the institution, and to prescribe how it should be dealt with? The presumption is all the other way: and the result thus far shows, that our officious attempts to "help" them, have only wounded and embarrassed them.

Again, we are interdicted from meddling with this question by the obligations of the Federal Constitution. If you ask for chapter and section, I point you to the whole instrument as expounded by its contemporaneous history. Everything about it recognizes the exact equality of the several States, and their absolute independence of each other and of the central government, as to all their reserved rights. These principles belong to the very foundations of the Republic. They were found indispensable to the formation of a Federal Union: they are no less vital to its preservation. No State nor group of States will remain in the Union, if denied their proper equality and independence. And as these (so I have endeavored to show) may be impugned no less really by systematic detraction and calumny, than by force of arms or legislative enactments, it becomes a religious duty with all parties, to respect not merely the letter but the spirit of our national covenant. *Christianity* forbids us to do anything, even in the way of taunt, or vituperation, or menace, in derogation of that compact. And *a fortiori*, if the compact, according to its obvious purport and design, has been violated by actual legislation, common honesty requires that such statutes be repealed. No matter what abstract opinions may be entertained respecting the provision of the Constitution here referred to: we are estopped from all protest on that point. The Constitution has been adopted. The obligation is upon us. And the morality which insists upon the fulfilment of contracts,

will no more justify attempts to evade the requisitions of the clause in question, by vexatious enactments and forms of process, than it will sanction direct nullification. Remember, I entreat you, in listening to this language from the pulpit, that the fearful alternative to the rejection of this constitutional demand, is the sacrifice of our glorious UNION. And with such an issue before us, can we hesitate,—will religion itself let us hesitate,—for one moment, whether to fulfil *every* engagement the Constitution has laid upon us?

Every thoughtful man is looking abroad over the country, and asking in sadness, whether anything can be done to allay this ferment and restore our ancient concord. Most humiliating it is to reflect, that our troubles are all self-imposed. They might have been avoided. They ought to have been avoided. There are difficulties and dangers enough inseparable from the working of a great political system, without augmenting them by factitious evils. We have the true key to them in a saying eighteen centuries old: "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, *even of your lusts* that war in your members?" Honest differences of opinion there are on the subject of slavery, and on its moral and political relations. Occasions may arise when these topics may and should be discussed But everything depends upon the motives which prompt to such discussions, and the temper in which they are conducted. If one could believe that the agitation of this subject

was to be referred to patriotism, to a philanthropic regard for the blacks, or to a genuine religious zeal, it were easier to tolerate even somewhat of excess in the ardor with which it is debated. That these elements have had a share in it; that with many persons they have been the sole springs of action; it would be uncharitable to deny. But for the most part, we must recur to that apostolic formula for a true explanation of this phenomenon. Could we eliminate from this fatal controversy all that is to be set down, North and South, to the account of personal ambition and revenge, to the account of sectional jealousies, to the account of partisan zeal, and to the account of misguided philanthropy, the residuum would scarcely be enough to create a ripple on the surface of our politics. This conviction it is which makes the whole thing so offensive and so trying to men who really love their country—their whole country,—and who feel that God has endowed us with the means and appliances of national prosperity beyond any people known to history except the ancient Hebrews. And *now*, if the *people* might but receive a baptism from on high, in the strength of which they should rise up and say, the North to the South, and the South to the North: "We have listened too long to unhallowed counsels; let there be no strife between us, for we be brethren;" —the country would be at rest.

Whether we have any sufficient ground to hope for so auspicious a result, is a question which Omniscience alone can answer. Of this we may be certain:—Un-

less He interpose for us, the greatest of all earthly calamities is upon us: and if He should interpose, the reasonable presumption is, that it will be by bringing back all parties and sections to listen once more to the dictates of Christian morality. Ambitious leaders have abused their confidence, and inflamed their mutual resentments, until the unholy strife has brought the country to the brink of ruin. North and South, Christianity has so long been denied *her* rights, that a casual observer might suppose there were only left here and there a few faithful souls to do her homage.

But the might and majesty of JEHOVAH are hers. And should it please HIM to send her forth on this beneficent mission, harmony will be restored. Even now there are some cheering tokens, that the North is preparing to rescind her obnoxious laws, and tender the Olive-branch to the South. Should this be done, it ought to be met in the same spirit of conciliation—and *will* be, unless the South means to repeat the crimes she has so long charged upon the North. This UNION is too sacred a trust to be sacrificed except upon the most imperative grounds. It has cost too much blood and treasure: it is freighted with too much happiness for this great nation: it is too closely linked with the cause of human liberty, and with the salvation of the world. To destroy it at the bidding of passion; to destroy it until every practicable means for preserving it has been tried and exhausted, would be a crime of appalling turpitude against patriotism, against religion, and against humanity. Let us not

cease to plead with God, that He may avert this great calamity. Peradventure He may be leading us through these scenes of turmoil and conflict, that all classes and parties may come to a better understanding of their mutual rights and duties, and so re-establish the harmony of the country upon a sure and permanent basis. Should this be the result, we may look forward to another DAY OF THANKSGIVING, not "curtained with clouds," but radiant with the beams of a brighter sun than that which this day bathes all nature with its splendors.

54 W

WERT
BOOKBINDING
Grantville, Pa
March - April 1989
We're Quality Bound